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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001668

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [CG](#) [AO](#)

SUBJECT: RETURN OF THE TIGERS TO DRC

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

1. (C) PolCouns met October 4 (at their request) with a group of Katangan Tigers in Kinshasa to, as they put it, pave the way for the return of the exiles. (Note: The Tigers are seeking to return after over 30 years in exile, as Kapend stressed several times. Given evidence of their attacks on civilians in Katanga province, however, their return is problematic at best and provocative at worst. End Note.) General Kapend Elie Kanyumba, supreme commander of the Tigers, headed the three-person delegation, which also included General Andre (no last name given), the Inspector General of the Tigers, and Colonel William, head of security for the Tigers. General Kapend said within the next two to three weeks, approximately 40,000 Tiger ex-combatants and family members will begin their return to the DRC, mostly entering through Katanga province and then dispersing to other points of origin (he cited Bukavu, in South Kivu, for instance, in the case of General Andre, and Mbandaka, Equateur province, for Colonel William, and mentioned both Kasai provinces as well). Kapend said they have not been in touch with UNHCR, nor with MONUC (except via a protocolary letter to SRSB Swing). Kapend expects to have a press conference in Kinshasa on/about October 12 to announce the coming of the Tigers, and said that by October 20 he will have filed the necessary paperwork to register his political party, which will enable him to run for election as president of the DRC.

2. (C) Kapend gave PolCouns copies of documents indicating that 8,040 of the returnees are military, and said that he expects that they will be integrated into the FARDC, after which some may elect to be demobilized. (Note: Separately, Kapend indicated that 1,250 of the above number represent the command staff of the Tigers militia, who would expect to retain their ranks and enter the FARDC "with dignity." End Note.) He also gave PolCouns a copy of a letter from Defense Minister Onusumba indicating that, while the GDRC might consider this possibility, at the moment there is no provision for folding the ex-Tigers into the ongoing brassage (mixing) process. Kapend had no answer to PolCoun's question as to what the civilian members of the group would do once they returned, particularly given existing unemployment in the DRC. Instead, he stressed the importance of returning in the stated period, in order to ensure that "his people" are registered to vote in next year's elections. In addition, he said that he already counts on about 6,000 supporters, mostly in Katanga, his home province.

3. (C) Comment: Another problem brewing. There would never be a good time to have the former Tigers return, but this is a particularly inopportune moment. Several months ago PolCouns had heard talk in Katanga that the Tigers might return to Congo, but it was phrased in the context of a post-electoral process. It seems clear that the GDRC is not prepared to receive them (regardless of what informal conversations might have taken place), and their "voluntary" return is likely to come as yet another unpleasant shock to the UNHCR, already bracing for unexpected demands to assist the return of refugees from Tanzania and Rwanda -- also motivated by the upcoming elections. Having Tigers again in the Congo forests clearly has the potential to create more problems in terms of security and social instability, above all in Katanga.

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